

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BELIZE 00040 210002Z

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AF-08 EA-07 NEA-10 ACDA-07 EB-07 OMB-01

TRSE-00 AID-05 /126 W

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R 192200Z JAN 77

FM AMCONSUL BELIZE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5420

INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MEXICO

USUN NEW YORK 0111

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BELIZE 0040

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR PFOR GT UK BH

SUBJECT: PREMIER PRICE'S CONVERSATION WITH BETHUEL WEBSTER

1. IN COURSE OF SMALL STAG LUNCHEON IN HONOR OF BETHUEL WEBSTER (U.S. MEDIATOR AND AUTHOR OF WEBSTER PROPOSALS OF 1968) WHO WAS IN BELIZE AS A TOURIST, PREMIER PRICE DISCUSSED BELIZE DISPUTE. OTHER GUESTS WERE DEPUTY MINISTER ROGERS, AMBASSADOR (TO CARI-COM) HARRY COURTENAY AND I.

2. AT WEBSTER'S REQUEST, PRICE BRIEFLY REVIEWED EVENTS OF PAST FEW YEARS. OF INTEREST WAS PREMIER'S INTRODUCTORY COMMENT THAT HIS GOVERNMENT'S RECENT EFFORTS IN THE U.N. AND IN OTHER INTERNATIONAL FORA WERE IN IMPLEMENTATION OF A STRATEGY URGED UPON HIM IN 1973 BY TANZANIAN AMBASSADOR TO THE U.N. SALIM SALIM. LATTER HAD URGED UPON HIM THE VIEW THAT INDEPENDENCE FOR BELIZE COULD MOST EFFECTIVELY BE PURSUED BY "INTERNATIONALIZING" THE DISPUTE. SINCE THEN, PRICE SAID, GOB HAD SPARED NO EFFORT TO PROJECT
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BELIZE 00040 210002Z

BELIZE'S QUEST FOR INDEPENDENCE ONTO THE WORLD STAGE. IT WAS CLEAR FROM PREMIER'S REMARKS THAT ALTHOUGH HE WAS PROUD OF THE RESULTS THUS FAR ACHIEVED, HE BELIEVED IT WOULD BE NECESSARY TO CONTINUE TO PRESS FOR INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT. HE SEEMED TO VIEW THE PROSPECT OF A CONTINUING DIPLOMATIC CAMPAIGN WITH RELISH. HE TOLD WEBSTER PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE IN CURRENT TALKS, BUT SAID THAT IF GUATEMALA CONTINUED TO INSIST ON A SLICE OF BELIZEAN TERRI-

TORY TALKS WERE DOOMED. HE SAID HE, ALONG WITH COURTENAY AND ATTORNEY GENERAL ASSAD SHOMAN, WOULD BE LEAVING FOR LONDON WITHIN THE NEXT FEW DAYS IN ORDER TO CONCERT WITH HMG RE LATTER'S POSITION IN NEXT ROUND OF TALKS WITH GUATEMALA.

3. PRICE SAID HE HAD BEEN IN CORRESPONDENCE WITH LEADERS OF SEVERAL NEIGHBORING GOVERNMENTS - HE SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED ONLY GENERAL TORRIJOS OF PANAMA AND PRESIDENT ANDRES PEREZ OF VENEZUELA - WITH A VIEW TO ENLISTING THEIR HELP IN PERSUADING GUATEMALA TO SETTLE THE DISPUTE. AT AN EARLIER STAGE HE HAD THOUGHT ANDRES PEREZ WOULD SUPPORT BELIZE IN REJECTING CESSION OF TERRITORY AS AN INGREDIENT IN ANY SETTLEMENT, BUT MORE RECENTLY VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT HAD BEEN EQUIVOCAL ON THIS POINT; THE GOV WAS, HOWEVER, TAKING A VERY ACTIVE INTEREST IN SEEKING A SETTLEMENT. GENERAL TORRIJOS FULLY SUPPORTED BELIZE, PREMIER SAID, AS PANAMA'S VOTE IN UNGA HAD INDICATED. AS FOR THE LARGER LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES, PRICE VOICED SATISFACTION THAT NONE HAD VOTED AGAINST BELIZE. HE THOUGHT EVOLUTION OF DISPUTE INTO A LATIN VS BLACK ISSUE WAS SOMETHING THESE COUNTRIES WERE ESPECIALLY DESIROUS OF AVERTING. DEPUTY PREMIER ROGERS INTERJECTED THAT THE ISSUE WAS BECOMING INCREASINGLY EMBARRASSING TO LATIN AMERICAN GOVERNMENTS - HE MENTIONED THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC - IN COUNTRIES WITH LARGE BLACK POPULATIONS AND PRESSURE FROM THESE COUNTRIES FOR A SETTLEMENT COULD BE EXPECTED TO INCREASE IF DISPUTE REMAINED AN ISSUE IN THE U. N.

4. PRICE SAID THAT LINE HE WAS TAKING IN HIS CORRESPONDENCE WITH HEADS OF NEIGHBORING GOVERNMENTS WAS TO PROPOSE THAT THE SITUATION BE RETURNED TO THAT PREVAILING AFTER THE TREATY OF CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BELIZE 00040 210002Z

1859, WHEN ONLY HMG'S UNDERTAKING TO BUILD A ROAD REMAINED TO BE FULFILLED. GRANTED, CIRCUMSTANCES HAD CHANGED SINCE 1859 AND PERHAPS THERE WERE OTHER PROJECTS GUATEMALA WOULD NOW PREFER - E.G., A HYDROELECTRIC PLANT, OR REPAIR OF CERTAIN EARTHQUAKE DAMAGE - ADDING AIRILY THAT THE UK SHOULD BE WILLING TO COME UP WITH 25, 50 OR EVEN A HUNDRED MILLION POUNDS IN ORDER TO FULFILL, AT LAST, ITS TREATY OBLIGATION.

5. WEBSTER ASKED WHAT PRICE PERCEIVED MEXICO'S POSITION TO BE IN REGARD TO A PUTATIVE SETTLEMENT. PREMIER SAID MEXICO HAD WAFFLED A BIT DURING THE PAST YEAR BUT GOB THOUGHT GOM WOULD ACQUIESCE IN ANY SETTLEMENT NOT INVOLVING A CESSION OF TERRITORY. HOWEVER, IF GOB WERE TO CEDE TERRITORY IN THE SOUTH, THEY (GOB) UNDERSTOOD MEXICO WOULD ASK FOR CHANGES IN BELIZE/ MEXICAN BOUNDARY WHICH WOULD PERMIT ACCESS TO CHETUMAL VIA INTERNATIONAL WATERS RATHER THAN THROUGH BELIZEAN TERRITORIAL WATERS AS IS NOW THE CASE.

6. WEBSTER EXPRESSED REGRET BUT NOT SURPRISE THAT THE DISPUTE

HAD DRAGGED ON SO LONG, AND ADDED THAT HE WAS NOT SORRY HIS PROPOSALS HAD BEEN REJECTED BY THE PARTIES. HE CONFESSED HE HAD DOUBTED THEY WOULD PROVE WORKABLE AND, IN FACT, WAS RATHER RELIEVED WHEN THEY WEREN'T EVEN TRIED.

7. WEBSTER SAID HE HAD A WARM, CLOSE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH INCOMING SECRETARY VANCE AND VOLUNTEERED TO DISCUSS THE PROBLEM WITH HIM IF PRICE WOULD SUPPLY HIM WITH A TALKING PAPER. THE PREMIER INSTRUCTED AMBASSADOR COURTENAY TO PREPARE SAME.

8. COMMENT. PRICE APPEARED TO BE BASING HIS PLANS ON ASSUMPTION CURRENT TALKS WOULD FAIL. ROGERS' COMMENT ON POSSIBLE FUTURE ACCENTUATION OF RACIAL RAMIFICATIONS OF DISPUTE MAY MEAN GOB IS CONSIDERING HOW BEST TO EXPLOIT RACIAL ANGLE. PRICE MAY OR MAY NOT GET REQUESTED TALKING PAPER FROM COURTENAY, BUT THERE WOULD SEEM TO BE A FAIR CHANCE WEBSTER MAY BROACH SUBJECT TO SECRETARY VANCE. END COMMENT.

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PAGE 04 BELIZE 00040 210002Z

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